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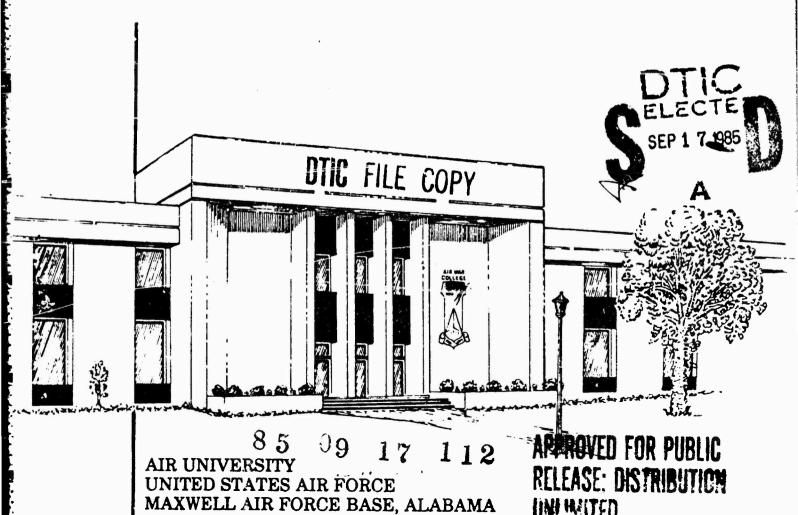
RESEARCH REPORT

No. AU-AWC-85-058

ASSESSING PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD THE MILITARY

By LIEUTENANT COLONEL CARL H. FOSTER

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16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION

17.	COSATI CODES		18. SUBJECT TERMS *(Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)*
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19. ABSTRACT *(Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)* Opinions and attitudes of the US public toward its military have shifted over the years from strong admiration to fear and contempt. A number of historical and cultural events have helped shape public opinion. Although public opinion is not predicated solely on what happens in an historical and cultural sense, it should be analyzed and documented on the premise that public opinion affects national power, and those things which affect national power are within the realm of interest of the military and national government. A perhaps frightening aspect of the dynamics of shifting public opinion is the uncontrolled nature of the shifts and the resultant impact on national power. Also influencing public opinion are developments in weapons and military technology, the massive Soviet propaganda effort, and the mass communications media. This paper is written with the purpose of raising the level of awareness of military and national leaders to the threat to national power which, although lying subtly out of view because it does not pose an immediate threat to our security, nonetheless offers a formidable challenge now. A broad proposal would lay the foundation for proper research and development.

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ASSESSING PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD THE MILITARY

by

CARL H. FOSTER
Lieutenant Colonel, USAFR

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH

REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Dr. Caroline Westerhof

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA
March 1985

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: ASSESSING PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD THE MILITARY

AUTHOR: Carl H. Foster, Lieutenant Colonel, USAFR

Opinions and attitudes of the U.S. public toward its
military have shifted over the years back and forth between
a strong admiration for men in uniform to fear and contempt.
A number of historical and cultural events have influenced
these shifts and helped shaped public opinion. These
events, unfolding as a matter of historical course, often
cannot be predicted nor controlled.

Although public opinion is not predicated solely on
what happens in an historical and cultural sense, it should
be analyzed and documented based on the premise that public
opinion affects national power, and those things which
affect national power are within the realm of interest of
the military and national government.

Perhaps a frightening aspect of the dynamics of
shifting public opinion is the uncontrolled nature of the
shifts and the resultant impact on national power. Also
influencing public opinion are developments in weapons and
military technology, the massive Soviet propaganda effort,
and the mass communications media.

This paper is written with the purpose of raising the
level of awareness of military and national leaders to the
threat to national power which, although lying subtly out of
view because it does not pose an immediate threat to our
security, none-the-less offers a formidable challenge now.
A broad proposal is suggested which would lay the foundation
for proper research and development with a sufficient
follow-on program based upon findings.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Carl H. Foster is an Air Force
Reservist on a leave of absence from the Farm Credit Banks
of Sacramento, California, while attending Air War
College.He is a graduate of the University of the Pacific,
Stockton, California, where he earned a Master's of Arts
degree in psychology. Lieutenant Colonel Foster has worked
as a civilian in the area of human learning for 15 years and
has maintained an active interest in public opinion and its
shaping. With twenty years experience in the Air Force, he
has served as a unit commander and a navigator. During his
career in the military he has traveled throughout Europe,
South America, the Pacific region, and the United States.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PUBLIC OPINION, NATIONAL WILL, STRATEGY

A PROPOSAL FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

For a number of years I have noticed that the image
of the Air Force held by my friends and business
acquaintances is different from my image of it. Being a
member of the Air Force Reserve perhaps my view is
somewhat parochial. Nonetheless, it is often surprising
to hear what people outside of the military and government
think about issues of military importance and national
defense. This paper is shaped around the idea that what
the public thinks about the Air Force --and the military
in general-- is not in fact what the Air Force is really
like. It is a paper about the cultural and historical
factors that may have influenced public thinking on the
military. By tracing the changing public images of the
warrior and war, by analyzing the impact of our public's
historic "fear" of big government on its image of the
military, and by examining the impact that technology and
weapons of mass destruction have had on the public's image
of the military, we can draw conclusions about public
opinion, national will, and national power, and how these
interrelate. To a large extent this image--perhaps it can
be called a faulty image--is due to a lack of knowledge.
As the major institution in our nation for disseminating
facts (knowledge), the mass communications media has had a
dramatic impact on shaping the image of the military. In
a very real way, the media has had a dramatic impact in
shaping national will and national power.

1

CHANGING IMAGES OF THE WARRIOR AND WAR

Historically Americans have exhibited ambivalent feelings
towards its military. The colonists did not follow the
British method of fighting wars by frontal, orderly
assault. They perceived themselves as natural fighters,
more effective fighters, unbound by the rules of the
British army that seemed to contribute to its defeat. On
the other hand, America's national origins sprang out of
many military battles. During the founding years and
until recently American wars have had a crusade spirit
behind them. Even the beginnings of the Vietnam conflict
were rooted in an honorable campaign to halt Communist
expansionism. Consider the image of the Minuteman of our
nation's early years. They weren't warriors; they were
American boys who by chance of fate wound up with guns in
their hands, and even though they weren't warriors, they
still won their battles. This same image emerged again
during World War II.(1)

But the image of hero did not always hold up during the
last years of World War II. TIME magazine reported that
"one out of four American soldiers tacitly admitted that
his primary concern was not to secure surrender, but to
kill as many Japanese as possible." Thus emerged an image
of the warrior who almost resembled an executioner, for

2

whom killing was an end in itself, not to unlike what murder is all about.(2)

This kind of image again emerged in Vietnam where the public watched executions on television, read about massacres in the news media, and were told to think of the war in terms of bodies counted dead. It became impossible for the public to reconcile what they saw and heard with any crusading ideal which might have otherwise galvanized our society into continuing the effort. The damage to the image of the American soldier was immense. From every perspective the American soldier did not have what it took to bring that war to an honorable end; such a prospect did not fit the historical image of the warrior-hero.(3)

Whether soldiers are scorned or honored depends largely on how badly they are needed and how successful they are. After suffering the large number of casualties of World War I, generals and military officers were widely regarded as blundering butchers; in World War II Allied commanders seemed true heroes; those from Vietnam were branded amoral and vicious.(4)

Consider the setting today; we all view the world through our own "lenses" shaped by what we read, see, and hear. The public, those who do not work in any type of

3

government job, view the Air Force, the military, through lenses shaped by experiences that seems to give them an inaccurate view. In fact perceptions are often shaped by dimly held images that originate from many sources. Novels, films, plays, songs, all are popular avenues through which we gather our own "dimly held images". Taken in the aggregate, if these images are predominantly negative, then the overall impression will be negative.

There are a number of contradictions which exacerbate the problem of image making. For example, consider the profession-of-arms in comparison with other professions. Those in the profession-of-arms are expected to have qualities that are both the highest and the lowest at the same time: courage, self-sacrifice, as well as utter ruthlessness and savagery. Even though all societies sanction killing under certain conditions, those who professionally employ extreme violence on society's behalf (and with society's support) are often regarded as strange and dangerous creatures.

General George S. Patton, Jr., once described professional men-at-arms as "Killers". It is that last word that creates the ultimate gulf between soldier and civilian, and raises the question of whether or not soldiers are civilized.(5)

4

Casual remarks, printed stories, televised newscasts,
entertaining films where soldiers are heard saying
"killing people never bothers me" and/or "I do like to see
arms and legs fly" leave a question in the minds of the
public about the basic character and honor of the officer
or soldier; such comments, made for whatever reasons,
violate the image our society holds for itself. And once
so violated, the historical image of the warrior-hero
erodes ever so slightly. The cumulative effect throughout
society is not slight and hurts the image of the military
in general.

Another factor that exists as a part of military life
that runs counter to life in the civilian community is the
adherence to rules and strict obedience of orders. This
behavior suggests that military people cannot think for
themselves, something our society holds to be a virtue.
The old joke about the soldier's head being situated in
such a position so as to inform him of the height to which
his salute should be brought is alive. At the same time
the public recognizes-at least in some distant memory-that
no society can come into being nor maintain itself as a
social order free from engulfment by outside forces
without nurturing the warrior amongst its midst. So the
warrior, who possesses the skill and weapons to control,
is juxtaposed in second position behind his civilian

5

masters who have little absolute power. What image does this factor bring into the perceptions of society about the military?(6)

With the emergence of atomic weapons and high tech weapons a subtle but prominent change in image has taken place. In the minds of many in our society, and in the world at large, total war has become a harsh, frightening reality. Push button war is not seen as something .happening between heroic men defending a cause, but something accidental and under the control of a body of operatives who are not necessarily to be trusted -- the military. Gone is the "American boy who by chance of fate wound up with a gun in his hand". In his place is the self-serving bureaucrat -- the American military officer and his war making machine.

As weapons become more powerful, and as technology continues to modernize and revolutionize systems for making war, the warrior appears less powerful. He no longer seems to be in control, nor is he the central actor in the drama of making war. Writers of all kind began to reflect a new view of the military and its function. No longer is it the defender of our freedoms, principles, beliefs, and way of life, but now it is a consolidation of absurd contradictions, driven by self-serving members of

6

the military-industrial, money-making few, another image
inconsistent with what the public holds of itself.(7)

THE SHAPING OF OUR SOCIETY: AN AVERSION TO WAR

Apart from the discussion of the evolving attitudes
toward war and the warrior, certain historical factors
about our society have left strong cultural patterns which
influence today's public impressions about the military.
It may be easier to agree upon the historical factors
than to agree upon their contemporary application to the
shaping of our society and attitudes toward war. A
starting point for discussion is the premise that the
present generation is the sum product of past generations.
The past continues to influence the present, and unless
our society experiences a radical and permanent
change(such as being conquered in war), the national
outlook is not likely to change significantly. Frederick
Hartmann calls this phenomenon the "'cardinal principle of
past-future linkages'. This principle warns us to look to
the past in judging the future." Hartmann further
cautions that the "failure of the leaders of one nation to
grasp how another looks at life, and is likely to react,
often leads to calculations very wide of the intended
mark."(8)   Cannot this same principle be applied by the
leaders of our own nation in examining how our public will
grasp issues and react to them?   Is it not mandatory that
7

the leaders of this nation consider how our public views
war and the warrior, thoroughly understand the
psychological and sociological dimensions, and establish
and manage any shortfalls which might effect national
security?

How then has our past developed factors which may
shape our future thinking toward war? First we can look
at the type people who settled this continent from Europe
and can trace emerging cultural trends. The American
Colonists successfully separated from their past through
a popular revolution. After winning independence, our
founding fathers followed a policy of refraining from
alignments with European powers. "Entangling alliances"
were to be avoided because such would cause un-sought
after trouble. Our early leaders correctly guessed that
European powers might well check each other's ambitions,
leaving the United States in peace. Perhaps this was the
begining of the concept of a balance of power; it seemed
to work. Power struggles in Europe kept England, France,
and Spain jockeying for positions, and, with the exception
of the Civil War, the United States achieved peace and
security without much positive effort on its own part.(9)

During this period the United States concentrated its
energies on continental expansion. This process was
carried out with great success. Exploiting its vast

8

natural resources, the U.S. caught up with and then
outpaced Europe, rapidly expanding its industrial power in
relative peace. Although this experience and condition was
unique in history, the American public had no cause to
pause and reflect that this golden age of peace was
anything more than normal. Thus the American public
learned that by avoiding entangling alliances and
concentrating on individual growth and prosperity, the
good life could be had.(10) To the American public the
cardinal principle was to mind your own business.   The
public came to rely on a few tried and proven principles:
unilateralism, isolationism, fair and equal trade, freedom
of the seas, and neutrality. It was not until after World
War II that these principles were changed or abandoned.

Another fundamental factor which shapes our cultural
attitudes toward war is the form of our government
structure. It is a structure with deliberate built-in
friction. It is well known that the three branches of our
government were given powers to balance each other. No
one branch(faction, special interest group, etc.) could
gain dominance over another if each functioned as
initially designed. Thus the real power in government
shifted toward those actors who had the ability to
persuade.

Over the years the power of persuasion took on a very
important role. It was not by force that any principle of
government would prevail, but it was by the ability of
persuasion that laws and rules governing our society would
prevail. Advocacy became a fundamental skill for
influencing government and remains so today. Within this
arena the military seems to have few of the necessary
skills and training to persuade either the public or
Congress. Nonetheless this is not an arena in which the
professional military officer can relinquish interest.

The easy approach is to reflect on the fact that our
civilian bosses in the Pentagon are there to do this task.
True. However with the kind of change in leadership that
occurs every four or so years, where is the corporate
memory so necessary to a powerful advocacy role? Likewise
military leaders have little experience functioning as
advocates. There appears to be a shortage of Air Force
officers, trained in human resource management, who have
the skills of persuasion, public speaking, and advocacy
which are necessary to function successfully within this
model of government.

Like it or not America was thrust into a leadership
role following World War II, and our leaders abandoned
many of the concepts of isolationism held during our first
200 years of growth. Forces driving this change have been

10

mentioned: nuclear weapons, high technology, etc. Other
forces have influenced and fragmented domestic American
political cohesion, altering the nation's priorities, and
undermining more traditional thinking. One such force has
been the ascendancy of single-issue political causes.
Each of these causes generated its own passionate
countermovement, drawing new and bitter lines in national
politics, and escalating the involvement in partisan
politics of organized ideological extremism of the right
and left.(11) Advocacy at its extreme!

Much of the turbulence in American politics in the
late 1960's and early 1970's was aggravated by continued
American involvement in the Vietnam conflict. Regardless
of how well we in the military might feel that we have
been exonerated finally by historians reporting on the
involvement of our senior political leaders, the vast
majority of our public holds the military directly
responsible for all of the ills of that era. Vietnam
became the axis around which the "old politics" could be
distinguished from the "new", the right from the left.
That war, that era, has permanently altered the cultural
perceptions of war and the warrior in the view of the
public. Current writers on military strategy, reacting to
public outcys of that era, pronounce "the public will not
support a drawn out conflict" "the nation must clearly

11

know it's objectives before entering another war", and so
on. While there may be some value in these observations,
military planners should exercise caution in applying
absolute value to them.(12)

Another factor in our culture which probably has vast
implications for understanding the current American view
of the military and war is detente. Following the Soviet
withdrawal from Cuba, U.S. policy turned to detente, arms
control, and a unilateral ceiling on the deployment of
American ICBMs. This course of action seems to fit very
well into our cultural heritage and views toward war. To
the guy on the street, we were going to be able to
co-exist with the Soviet Bear. To the guy on the street
we were going to sign agreements which would curtail
future military buildups. However, no one seems to have
fully understood the Soviet pronouncement after their
withdrawal from Cuba that the "Americans will never be
able to do this to us again."(Soviet diplomat Vasily V.
Kuznetsov) While the American public, and our leaders,
worked to build down our forces, the Soviets successfully
launched a determined, systematic, and long-term program
of expanding all categories of its military power.(13)

The recurring ambiguities in the perceptions of both
the American public and our leadership regarding the terms
and requirements of the continuing U.S.-Soviet power

competition plus the agonizing Vietnam experience help
explain the inadequate U.S. response to the sustained
Soviet build-up of military power. It was the Soviet
invasion of Afghanistan that jolted the American public,
and caused an assessment of our position which lead to
rejuvenated efforts to upgrade our military preparedness.

Even with upgrading our military, how strong is
public confidence in the wisdom of our military defense
policy? Are there potential problems that will
substantially weaken our position over the next decade?
The answers to these questions require research, not into
written articles, but into the minds and thoughts of the
public. Fundamental to answering these questions is
setting aside the proposition that public confidence will
be difficult to generate in times when the fighting
starts. The more serious problem is how to generate and
maintain public confidence in the absence of immediate
danger of war. There has not been a war between East and
West for well over a generation, and the existence of
nuclear weapons seems to render war unlikely. Thus war is
largely a memory. Without a war to fight, or to remember,
it becomes increasingly difficult for the public to
justify spending scarce money to upgrade a military whose
value as an institution is coming under question.

13

Two contradictory voices have appeared as advocates
confusing rather than resolving the faltering public
confidence about national security affairs. These voices
represent alarmists and complacents. For the alarmist
nuclear war is inevitable. According to those who hold
this view, the mindless accumulation of nuclear weaponry
is bound to lead to a world catastrophe sooner or later.
The opposite view - the emergence of complacency - asserts
there is no need to worry about military imbalances
because deterrence works. Our efforts, particularly in
times of scarce resources, should be towards maintaining
our effective deterrence. Don't spend money on
conventional weapons because our nuclear capability has
successfully warded off any real threat.(14)

Public confidence in the wisdom of our military
defense policy relying on nuclear weaponry is currently in
a deep crisis precisely because of the combined effects of
alarmism and complacency. The doomsday argument and the
"it won't be so bad" argument create in the public mind a
deep sense of uneasiness. To dismiss the anti-nuclear
sentiments as those of a minority is to misunderstand the
uneasiness which is so wide-sprea. This problem will not
automatically go away; it is going to have to be handled
skillfully through public debate. Without skilled
advocates providing the public a balanced education on not

14

only nuclear issues, but also on national security affairs
in general, public confidence will continue to wax and
wane in unpredictable ways.

Finally there is the long standing debate among
American politicians regarding Soviet "intentions". The
debate questions whether Soviet aims are necessarily
hostile to the interests of the United States or whether
Soviet leadership can be convinced to accept common and
binding rules for peaceful competition. America's defense
policies have reflected the inconclusiveness of this
debate in the periodic swinging toward one point or the
other of public attitudes.(15)

WEAPONS, TECHNOLOGY, AND PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT WAR

What have weapons to do with public opinion and war
and vice versa? Over the centuries as new weapons were
invented and used the public often described them as the
ultimate weapon to win all wars, etc. The introduction of
the bow and arrow, the musket, the repeating rifle, the
machine gun, the tank, and lately the nuclear weapon, all
have been characterized as the ultimate weapon. However,
nuclear weapons are so dramatic in their ability to
destroy life and property that their proliferation among
many nations has created substantial controversy in the
United States and the Western world. Along with the

15

development of these weapons has been the development of
missile systems, both land and sea, capable of delivering
tremendous destruction in a matter of minutes. Novels,
television documentaries, films, and personal appearances
by well known people, repeatedly document for the public
the reality of total war, made every place and upon all
people, soldier and civilian alike. Nuclear weapons,
rightly or not, are viewed by a substantial portion of the
public as the ultimate absurdity, blasting us all off the
face of the earth. Consider Joseph Heller's CATCH - 22
in which the main character, Yossarian, is the model of
the absurd hero. For Yossarian, the warrior, to defend
freedom and civilization is absurd when to defend them
amounts to destroying them.(16) To many of the public the
accronym that describes our strategic nuclear thinking -
MAD for Mutual Assured Destruction - says it all; they
totally reject the thought. This public rejection of an
ill defined nuclear strategy in MAD may have had
deleterious consequences in several ways: rejection of
funding for a follow-on defense program to the Minuteman
III, rejection of many projects that are nuclear related,
and rejection of passive defenses for survival.

Another and prominent characteristic of weapons
technology is the huge ascending costs and the fact that
modern weapons systems have to be selected well before

16

they exist. Public opinion impacts this process in
several ways. Primary of course is through funding. Once
again the MX Peacekeeper missile is a good example of how
public opinion and debate may have exerted sufficient
pressure to bring that program to a halt. Secondary
methods are through boycotts and demonstrations against
certain suppliers branded as part of the "military-
industrial complex".(17)

Paradoxically with the advent of modern weaponry both
our military and civilian populations appear to be
depending on the technological dimension of strategy, to
the detriment of its operational requirements, while we
ignore its societal implications altogether. Our
potential adversaries expend vast resources to insure that
their strategy drives their use of weaponry, the
production of weaponry, and the socialization process
necessary to gain public support.

Military technology and power in our country is
highly dependent upon the private sector industrial
capability. The relationship between industrial
capability and national security is practically unknown to
the public. But the public should know and should know
the consequences of the loss of industrial capability,
manufacturing skills, and the infrastructure to support
the production of war fighting materials.(18)

17

Interestingly, maybe frighteningly enough, weapons
development does not necessarily follow along to fill
voids in our defense strategy. Probably the greatest
instigation of new weapon development has come from public
and industrial pressure. Profit and money seem to be the
driving factor. Even Congressmen have been accused of
funding programs, not on their merit, but on the benefit
that their local districts will obtain. But this
condition is not satisfactory for the defense of the
United States. Genuine strategic requirements driven by
the threat must act to determine the weapons systems
required. The military must be ruthless in discarding the
old for the new, and forward thinking in the adoption of
new means of violence.

However within our public and political environment
there are a number of obstacles to changing weapons
development and procurement: faith in standing weapons
systems impedes forward thinking about newer, possibly
better systems, the need for standardization slows down
any thrust for change, and finally change is costly,
raising the question, is something new worth the price.
Whatever the obstacle to incorporating new technology,
public opinion plays a vital role in the success or
failure of efforts to initiate and sustain a program of
development through to the deployment of the weapon.(19)

18

SOVIET PROPAGANDA

The Soviets have committed resources over a long
period of time to influencing the attitudes of not only
their public but also the Western public, particularly the
United States public.(20)

Studying the Soviet propaganda effort can give us
important clues to their intentions and valuable lessons
on the shaping of public opinion. The Soviets have
accepted the adage attributed to Thomas Paine, "The pen is
mightier than the sword" with the complete understanding
that their purpose is to influence and shape the attitudes
and interests of the public. The term psychological
warfare aptly describes one of the keys to Soviet
strategy, yet it is both a term and an idea given little
emphasis by our government as it may apply within the
borders of our country. Perhaps the avoidance reflects a
deep-seated tradition within the American mind-set that
"nobody's going to mess with my mind". Regardless of
what the process is called, to avoid any organized attempt
to quantify and understand public opinion is to fail to
recognize its place in strategy, is to fail to recognize a
phenomenon which has provided the Soviets many advantages
and successes.(21)

Soviet Active Measures

19

As the Soviets use the concept, active measures encompass a wide range of activities: manipulating the media in foreign countries, the use of front groups and local communist parties for personal efforts, disinformation, and any operation which potentially can expand Soviet political influence. The Soviets are not shy about employing deception and clandestine means to mask Moscow's involvement. They have been successful over a wide geographic area, over time, and over a wide spectrum of activities. As a policy tool, active measures can be traced back into early Soviet history. After World War II the Soviets institutionalized these activities within the KGB, and in 1960 the term "active measures" first appeared. Our best information about the Soviet active measures comes from defectors. Two particularly excellent sources have been Ladislav Bittman, the one-time chief of the disinformation section of Czechoslovak intelligence, and Stanislav Levchenko, a former KGB major and active measures specialist.(22)

While the specifics of active measures vary widely, Levchenko stresses that all are designed to reinforce Soviet policy objectives, with the United States and NATO as the principal targets. Operatives pose in many roles: residents of foreign stations under diplomatic cover, most official representatives abroad, Soviet scholars,

20

journalists, and representatives of the Russian Orthodox
Church also often engage in active measures. Activities
include: agents abroad to sow dissent among emigre and/or
special interest groups, spreading rumors, forgeries,
newspaper stories planted in either willing or duped
papers abroad and reprinted in Soviet papers quoting the
"source" from the foreign paper, fake telegrams,
information booklets developed to look like official
American literature,etc.(23)

Soviet propaganda has the capacity to reach into our
homes on TV, radio, books, magazines, and newspapers.
Much of the success of the Soviet efforts can be
attributed to legitimate American sources with only part
of a story, the part the Soviets want them to have. One
example was a recent NBC television show where a handful
of German soldiers were televised demonstrating against
the deployment of the Pershing missiles. The impression
was that the German military is against that program.
Meanwhile the thousands of West German soldiers who want
the Pershings deployed were not seen. You may recognize
that the Soviets have been very successful with their
active measures against the deployment of the Pershings -
from their viewpoint. To date only half of the 108
Pershing II missiles planned for West Germany are
operational, and the controversy that surrounds them is

21

not gone yet. The five year old dispute over the installation has caused the biggest upheaval in postwar Germany since the historic debates about rearmament in the 1950s.(24)

There is a summary of impressive Soviet active measures in the Officer Review, December 1984, edition. This summary gives details of front groups, media manipulation, disinformation, forgeries, and agents of influence on world-wide missions to promote Soviet foreign policy goals and to undercut the position of Soviet opponents. The activities described are bold and intense, and they appear to reflect an increased use of psychological warfare against the Western world.(25)

Patrick Moynihan introduced into the Congressional Record - Senate, May 11, 1984, a finding on the use of Soviet active measures to undermine the relations between India and the U.S. by falsifying State Department cables and publishing a so-called Kirkpatrick Plan which was offensive to the Indians. Moynihan's assessment of the impact of the operation is that overall it was a very "clever piece of work and will inevitably persuade a certain number of persons in India, Central America and elsewhere that the United States is indeed out to set nations against one another and establish political and military dominance over key strategic zones." He

22

continues and points out that Soviet activity of this sort
must be challenged. Such activities will be in vain as
long as all concerned recognize the provocations for what
they are, and "acknowledge that this is neither an
isolated nor even a rare event."(26)

Assessing the impact of Soviet active measures is
difficult, and at the least, according to Under Secretary
of State Lawrence Eagleburger, "active measures have a
corrosive effect on open political systems." In dealing
with these events common sense requires that we counter
them through effective counterintelligence and by "keeping
our citizens as fully informed as possible of the
deceptive practices to which they are exposed."(27)

It is interesting to note that while we must be
concerned with the psychological warfare operations the
Soviets conduct outside their territory, we can also learn
something about their intentions by following what they
tell their own people. There are several developments
that require careful review and analysis.

Since 1980 official Soviet domestic information media
have conveyed a new, alarming assessment of the dangers of
nuclear war and of the possibility of the Soviet Union's
involvement in such a destructive conflict. This marks a
sharp shift from the sense of confidence in the

23

possibility of avoiding such a conflict that has been fostered in the years since Stalin's death.

Why have the Soviets taken this step? Does this step portend a direction of Soviet foreign policy for the near future and the Soviet leaders want to psychologically prepare their public for it? Such a drastic shift in the official line on the prospects of peace or war are relatively rare in recent Soviet history. The action also seems too fast and out of character: usually attempts to modify public opinion are made gradually. Without a serious effort to analyze this event all that can be concluded is that the Soviet public is currently experiencing a serious "war scare". It seems fair to state that the Soviet population now perceives the world situation in a more threatening way than they have in the recent past.(28)

Soviet propaganda and psychological warfare is a real factor in influencing public opinion in the West and in particular in the United States and must be dealt with in a positive, aggressive manner. Their efforts are against the attitudes and traditions which compile the American way of life; their efforts are against the public. According to Gary Hartel, a native of Silesia, East Germany, and a writer on Soviet psychological warfare, the United States can fail to meet this challenge only if we

24

fail to instruct Americans of Kremlin strategy. "We can
win once their methods are exposed."(29)
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THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

     News in the U.S. is treated as a commodity. It is
marketed, and trade is competitive. Competition demands
that it be "hot" and exciting. Contrast our democracy,
where news-information-is bought and sold, with a
totalitarian state where news is rationed and monopolized.
Within the U.S. competition for readers and consumers of
information helps determine how and what information
reaches the public; business organization and practices
are shaped through competition. Within a totalitarian
state there is no competition for readers and consumers of
information; the public gets what the state wants to
give.

     There is an ironic twist to the state of health of
the American mass media: with so much information, none
of which is governmentally controlled, why do American
consumers complain that they do not know what the facts
are? Is it because the media takes too many liberties
editorializing, sometimes ignoring relevant facts?
"stacking" their case? These questions and others must
become part of a rigorous debate within the profession and

25

within the public. Answers which improve the quality of information reporting are imperative. Other questions which might stimulate such a debate are: Are the organizational and business demands such that news consumed by our public fairly represents the conditions and events generating the news? Are the major news media controlled by special interest groups so that what the public consumes is no less controlled than that news consumed in a totalitarian state? Are there professional and ethical preparations which impose discipline to present news honestly and in a fully adequate manner? Are there continuing efforts on the part of the news industry to promote minimum standards of conduct, education, etc. for those in the field? In reviewing the literature on these topics there does not seem to be a consensus. With no clear voice leading the way toward resolving these issues, the role of the media in influencing the public, perhaps should be held up to scrutiny itself.

Why? Because the mass media--television, newspapers, radio, popular magazines and journals, etc.--do, as a matter of their prominence in our society, play several important roles that affect the conduct of American foreign policy affairs. They serve to inform the public about decisions made by our government. They are the primary source of information about world happenings.

26

They can play the role of supporter or adversary. They
can conduct and support investigations independent of
others and use their findings to trigger action from high
placed leaders. They can publish documents or not publish
documents which support (or do not support) a favored
action. They can mobilize or de-moblize. By the
application or withholding of services, the mass media
helps mold public opinion, directly affecting national
will and national power. Such power requires checks and
balances to prevent corruption.(30)

There is a history of attempts to develop adequate
checks and balances. For example, the Mayflower Decision
in 1941, the Fairness Doctrine in 1949, and various laws
and Supreme Court rulings on protection of news reporters
under the First Amendment to the Constitution.(31) But
have these laws and rulings worked to provide proper
checks and balances for the good of the public or for the
institutional good of the news industry?

Whatever the answer to this latter question, the
industry itself might profit by taking note and examining
why their status as an American institution has fallen to
such a low level of respect with the public over the past
few years. It has become clear that the news media does
not have total say in setting the agenda or controlling

27

what the public learns. One thing the public may have learned is that they can not trust what they read, see, or hear from common news sources. Less common, and less understood, avenues by which the public learns are found in corporate communication channels, social, professional, and religious organizations, novels, films, etc.(32)

There is also a group of "middle level" men and women who are strategically close enough to the public consumers of information and at the same time close to those makers of news so as to be able to influence both groups. These middle level people are crucial to the communications link between the public to be influenced and the decision makers, whether in industry or the government. In the military these are the colonels; in government, perhaps the permanent senior civil servants; in industry the general managers or the district representatives; in mass communications, the managing editors and news anchor persons, and so on. These people are not known to the public, but they are the ones who make things happen within their own industry.(33)

A basic question may be what (if anything) should be done in regard to the few whose impact upon the many is so much greater than that of the many upon the few? Part of the American culture is to distrust any attempt to control the majority by an unidentifiable few, especially if the

28

few represent a well-to-do elite. Because the American
consumer of information is becoming smarter and more
sophisticated, it is becoming increasingly difficult to
shape public opinion through the middle level group as
described. To shape public opinion--to educate--means
taking the information to the grass roots level and
trusting that the public can make decisions about its own
requirements when given all the relevant facts.(34)

There has been a communications revolution in the
world since World War II, and it has been led by
television. A lot of people around the world show
themselves to be "hungry" for news, or in a broader sense,
information. Private industry in the United States has
responded providing a wide range of television shows,
motion pictures, novels, biographies, radio, popular
songs, and other means for the "hungry" to get what they
want. Meanwhile there is so much information, so many
senders of information, that even those who do not
actively seek information can not help being bombarded
daily with it. The statistics describing the extent of
information transmissions is staggering: virtually 100%
of all American households have at least one television
set compared to 96% of all American households with indoor
plumbing; a newspaper is sold to one in three adults;
popular music records and albums are sold to millions and

29

aired to additional millions; and the list goes on and on in such other forms as public speeches, posters, leaflets, journals, annual reports, and political cartoons.(35)

In short public opinion is a fluid concept constantly under pressure to change by one interest group after another. This is not a "bad" phenomenon; but it must be recognized, and given the proper attention necessary to balance inaccurate preconceptions held by the public about the Air Force, the military, and our government's business. There are many compelling reasons for this last statement, but one example should serve to reinforce the idea. Consider the Vietnamese war.

Consensus on the real reasons for the defeat of the South Vietnamese may never be reached. However there is evidence that flagging U.S. public resolve sped that process along. One lesson learned from that conflict seems clear: a limited war of long duration against an aggressive, determined foe who is fighting a total war incurs special problems for public support. There can be no doubt about the role of the media (television, novels, songs, films, etc.) in the shaping of American attitudes toward that conflict.(36)

30

To what extent have the problems of public support
been investigated, quantified, and analyzed for future
considerations?   Regardless, the U.S. must aggressively
conduct fact-finding into the issue of public support, if
for no other reason than to insure a credible handling of
public support should our vital interests be challenged in
another Vietnam-like conflict.   The merits of this may be
argued, but the point remains that some form of limited
conflict may be the only viable alternative to
annihilation or capitulation.   Hence the case for learning
more about gaining public support through the mass
communication's media   seems justified.(37)

31

PUBLIC OPINION: DOES IT REFLECT THE MILITARY AS YOU KNOW
IT?

Experience with observing the attitudes and moods of
the public shows that public opinion towards its
institutions seems to swing from time to time between
extremes. History shows this to be true of the way the
public views its military. Probably at no time over the
last twenty years has public opinion and support been more
positive toward the military than the present. The quick
analysis of why the military is enjoying such support
attributes the positive public image as a result of the
strong support by a popular President. This is only part
of the total, and a more thorough analysis is needed.
Several "stories" about public opinion and its diversity
should underscore this point and help in the analysis.

A recent guest speaker at the Air War College spoke
of being surprised at what he saw and heard upon entering
Maxwell Air Force Base and throughout his visit. He
talked of his lack of understanding about the true nature
of the Air Force and its people, and he pointed out that
his circle of professional acquaintances and friends might
likewise be amazed at the high degree of capability,
technology, and talent existing within our
organization.(38)** The speaker? Dr. Terry Deal, author of
the book Corporate Culture. Here is a man who has served
on the faculties of Vanderbilt, Harvard, and Stanford

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32

Universities, who did the research necessary to write an
authorative work on the subject of corporate cultures of
several large, medium, and small corporations, and he
exclaims that he does not have a very good understanding
of the Air Force, its people, its technology, and its
mission. The question this short story raises is: to
what extent does Dr. Deal's experience reflect the
experience of our educated professionals, our public,
corporate America?

An excellent article, "Armed Forces Underestimate
Role of Public Attitudes", makes the statement that the
public will vote on issues affecting the military just as
they do on any issue: as they perceive them. Seems
self-evident. However, in spite of this critical fact,
the public often is left believing what they read in
publications and what they see and hear on television.
Thus while the public needs facts and figures about the
nature of its military, its personnel, and its mission,
they often receive only the most sensationalized
information, and often there is little or no balance in
the report. Public opinion is shaped in a haphazard way,
and when asked to vote on issues affecting the military,
they, the voting public, act not out of knowledge, but out
of an emotional, gut-level feeling. The results are not
due to a shortfall in intellectual ability within the

33

public, they are due to a shortfall in a balanced,
straight forward presentation of facts about the military
and national security.(39)

Another story should quickly illustrate the dichotomy
between fact and fiction about military affairs as viewed
as a function of public opinion. In a televised press
conference on January 9, 1985, President Reagan made the
observation, saying, "I wish whoever coined the words
'Star Wars' would take it back, because it doesn't
accurately reflect what the strategic defense
initiative(SDI) is all about." Think about it for a
moment: what does the term 'Star Wars' suggest to you?
Darth Vader shooting it out with fancy (and expensive)
weapons all over the universe? Whether by accident or by
design, the person who coined the term 'Star Wars' may
have done more to scuttle a very important military
program than almost any other effort.

One of the saddest (and perhaps most dangerous)
aspects of the controversy surrounding SDI is that the
public has yet to hear of the major reasons for such a
program: the Soviets are roughly 15 years ahead of the
U.S. in developing space technology which can shoot down
or in some way neutralize satellites and ballistic
missiles, and the program SDI is a defensive initiative,
not any offensive one.(40)

34

One additional word on the Soviet space program. Two
recently issued, authoritative assessments of their space
plans emphasize both the accelerating pace and the
increasing militarization of their efforts. These reports
provide information the public needs to know for sound
decision making. Yet the publication in which they are
printed, although within public domain, is not generally
read by the public--the Congressional Record.(41)

What impression does the public have of the nuclear
issue? Is the public so afraid of nuclear issues, that it
might vote to unilaterally disarm, dismantle nuclear power
plants, etc? Again there is no effort that is highly
visible that is making an attempt at informing the public
of the issues in a balanced, well-informed manner.
Instead the public is left to form opinions based upon
viewing the television program "The Day After" or reading
the novel Warday. Both treat the issue of nuclear war in
chilling terms. Both leave the impression that nuclear
war must be avoided regardless of the cost. Neither
inform the American public with a balanced story. Without
that the American public cannot make reasonable decisions
on the issues of nuclear weapons, energy, or war.

While military personnel do not want a nuclear war,
it is none-the-less a function of military leadership to
demand a complete airing of all the issues. What level of

35

understanding exists in the public concerning the status of Soviet nuclear weapons programs? of Soviet nuclear war defense programs? of Soviet civil defense education? The answers to these questions may be shocking to a large portion of the public, but the public needs to know because knowledge helps shape values and ideas, helps determine courses of action, and effects how political issues are solved at the voting place.

On the subject of chemical warfare, it seems that the public is rarely exposed to any of the compelling issues. But they can not be ignored in a world where the Soviets have shown a willingness to use chemical weapons. There is overwhelming evidence that in its war with Iran, Iraq has been using "yellow rain" -- a deadly poison supplied by the Soviets. Reports indicate that the Soviets use the same chemical weapon against the Afghanistans, and, in cooperation with the Vietnamese, against Cambodia and Laos. Some writers have suggested that there is a greater threat to the U.S. from chemical weapons than from nuclear. Yet the American public hasn't become excited about these developments. Is it because of the little or no press coverage which chemical warfare receives? Can this be a dangerous failure?(42, 43)

Each of the issues enumerated needs the military professional as a champion. Likewise, arms control, a

36

very emotional issue with our public, must be championed
by the knowledgeable military leader.(44) Without input
from the military, the public may not hear all sides of
the issue. In what has become an unfortunate development
within our political system, the public seems to demand
that every president make a deal with the Soviets without
considering the costs to us in terms of national security.
It's obvious that the Soviets know the American negotiator
is under pressure to obtain an agreement, so their
strategy at the table is to be patient, don't give up
anything, attack the Americans for not making progress,
etc. When we look at the record, ie., the "bottom line"
of whether or not we actually limited the arms race or
checked the activities of the Soviet tests and
developments of weapons, it is embarrassing. The General
Advisory Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament, a
bi-partisan Congressional committee, reported late last
year that the Soviets had demonstrated "....a pattern of
pursuing military advantage through selective disregard
for (Moscow's) arms-control duties and commitments" during
the period 1958-1983.(45) To what extent does the
American public know about this? Is there a public debate
going on? Can we take the pressure off our negotiators,
so that they can negotiate a fair reciprocal treaty?

PUBLIC OPINION, NATIONAL WILL, STRATEGY

37

We have a tough problem to work. It is a problem of
properly and adequately keeping the American people
informed, and at the same time, not undermining legitmate
national security issues. It is a problem of
procedure--how to accomplish the task without projecting
the image of a propaganda machine. It is a problem of
overcoming resistance within the Services to the idea of
keeping the public informed and trusting that the public
does have the sense to make sound, fundamentally correct
decisions about their own security. It is a problem of
who, what, where, when, and how to get this done with
limited resources. It is a long term problem and is not
going to be "cured" with one application of "medicine".

In order to grasp why we should be concerned with
public opinion, we first have to accept the premise that:
a military force is shaped (in democracies, at least) as
much by non-military forces as by strategies and weapons
and possible foes.(46) Many writers have written on the
subject of public opinion and national will--Clauzewitz,
Summers, and Weinberger to name a few of the more
prominent. In a major address to the National Press Club
in Washington, D.C., 28 November 1984, Secretary of
Defense Caspar Weinberger stated that before the U.S.
commits combat forces abroad, there must be some
reasonable assurance they will have the support of the

38

destroy things, we "neutralized targets".

By concealing in our words and statements the
realities of war, we sounded as though we were hiding
something. However the American public could watch the
war on television and see reality. The military lost a
lot of credibility by not talking straight and opening up
a dialogue with the public. And we lost emotional
commitment from the public.(48)

This same time mistake must not be repeated. To "win
the hearts and minds of people" the military must tell the
public its story. This is not a problem to be addressed
in the future when and if we go to war again. It is a
problem to be addressed now. Many of the public, many
Congressman, many uniformed military people themselves are
un-informed or mis-informed.

An example of the depth of mis-information can be
easily seen by the student of history. Our leaders have
instigated strategies since the 1960s which have been
based upon a near-total misreading of the Soviet
phenomena. Soviet leaders are opportunists with a
war-waging doctrine. Because such a doctrine is
abominable in the concepts of Americans, our strategy
failed to respond to the changing and rapidly improving
power structure of the Soviet military. We adopted a
"sophisticated self-restraint" strategy with the high

41

minded philosophy that the Soviets would follow our "good" example. Today, looking at the Soviet's powerful military, there can be legitimate argument over Soviet intentions, but no one seems to be arguing the contention that the Soviets are seeking to position themselves within world power politics to insure the survival of their societal assets(assured survival, not mutual assured destruction) and to pose the maximum pressure on American interests world-wide.(49)

On the issue of assured survival, the Soviets have a large-scale educational and training effort to teach their people survival techniques. They have a widely dispersed military industry and infra-structure to support survival and rapid rehabilitation in a military conflict. It's ironic. While the U.S. is openly sensitive to the well-being of human life, and the Soviets do not seem to place value on the individual, it is the Soviets who have a serious civil defense program.

Another very important consideration for public debate is the massive, and effective, Soviet propaganda effort. In New Lies for Old, Anatoliy Golitsyn, a former KGB intelligence agent, describes the world-wide communist use of strategic disinformation and how it influences public opinion. Their two primary targets: the United States and NATO. He does not chide the American public,

42

but he does stress that the Western world must come to know and understand the Soviet objectives for world domination, understand the ruthlessness with which they have gone about establishing their dominance, and look for the signs of weaknesses within Western culture that point to potential disaster. Many of those weaknesses can be traced to the inability of the Western public to act cohesively in order to regain momentum already lost to the Communists. Whether or not Golitsyn's analysis is correct, who is going to tell his story to the person on the street? After all, the "ability of a people to act cohesively and to comply is partially derived from their mutual understanding of issues and compatiability with alternative solutions."(50)

A PROPOSAL FOR ACTION

Based upon the premise that public opinion is a function of national will and national power and that those things which affect national power are within the interest of the military and national government, then certain minimum steps should be taken to understand its dynamics and shaping. In addition to the activities which focus on public relations, at a minimum, a comprehensive effort should be initiated to counter all untrue, biased, and misleading statements, documents, publications,

43

broadcasts, etc., which are in the public domain. To
accomplish this would require Air Force, or
military/government, personnel to be actively responsive
to what they see and what they hear. Responses would
necessarily have to be more than just letters to the
editor, although such would be a start. To be effective a
program spanning a broad range of activities should be
undertaken. This is not a proposal to turn every military
member loose to write letter, make speeches, etc.; this
proposal is based upon careful planning, organizing,
controlling, and coordinating a program for an effective
response.

Overcoming the discrepancy between the public's image
of the military--the Air Force in particular--and the real
nature of the military will be challenging. The evidence
seems overwhelming that, at a minimum, a central office
for research and coordination should be established. Such
an office might not have operational control over the
activities and those who engage in presenting the Air
Force story to the public, but the office would direct
surveys, research, analysis of effort, and report findings
and trends to public officials. Such an office would act
as a clearinghouse for developing, coordinating, and
disseminating educational activities and concepts of

44

operations to military organizations world-wide for use at the local level.

The actual organization of such an effort would depend upon its goals and objectives. Within the broader parameters enunciated above, several specific activities will provide the greatest return on effort. One specific activity would entail working with the mass communications media-radio, television, papers, novels, films, etc.-to reach the public with facts. Another specific activity would work through person-to-person contacts. This latter activity would encompass the informal communications channels that exist within special interest groups, some which are familiar to Air Force members who participate in local speaker's bureaus, for example, churchs, Rotary and other community clubs, corporate communication's networks, etc. Within this latter activity, although facts are important they would not overshadow the affect of personal charisma and the personal power which accrues to the articulate spokesperson for the Air Force. The Air Force as an institution would gain in reputation where such a spokesperson went.

The Air Force should not unleash untrained, poor public speakers with the idea that they can tell the story. Persons without the skills and personality to make effective public presentations would not enhance the

45

image. Developing the skills takes time and a specific
effort. As an adjunct to developing public speaking
skills, selected persons should be developed as advocates
of the Air Force story. Identification and training
should start early in a person's career, perhaps at the
eight to ten year point. Training and developing the
needed skills in Air Force personnel could be accomplished
at the Air War College. Currently there is a briefing
team which makes public presentations of the Air Force
story, and the officers on the team have gained the
experience needed to instruct and guide others.

One of the premises of this paper is that the public
if properly informed can and will make the proper
decisions providing for their security. Information about
the Air Force can come from many sources, some of which
are currently available. An example of an effective
educational tool available to the Air Force is the film
series "Air Force NOW". This series is excellent and,
although aimed at a military audience, it has potential
for providing the public information about the Air Force.
This is just one of the many creative activities which
could be used to educate, to pass on to the public correct
information about the nature and business of the Air
Force.

46

In concluding, to understand public opinion, its
forming and shaping, and its role in developing national
strategy and security will be a long term effort. To be
effective it must be based upon research and
experimentation, and the Air Force, the military, as an
institution needs the corporate experience and track
record upon which to call in any future national conflict
where understanding, and perhaps shaping, public opinion
is vital to national power.

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